

12-1951

Notes: Christmas Vesper: Point and Counterpoint, 1951

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DATE

OCCASION

Christmas Vesper - 1951.

THEME

Point & Counterpoint

Vesper 1959

1. Imagine - you may be wondering - a theme reminiscent of a book by a modern agnostic should become the subject of our Christmas meditation. point & counterpoint - musical derivation - two or more melodies running side by side - a composite melody which gains beauty and power by the recognition of its several elements - taken alone any one of them is incomplete - may even be poor and thin - but taken together there is meaning and beauty in their rise and fall, even in momentary dissonance which is resolved into final harmony - and the joined melodies feel sweet and sure on the listening ear. ^{only} Point - Counterpoint
2. My theme - you see - simple. Christmas has done that for life and history - introduced another melody into life, great and eternal - without which the discord of history and the broken music of our own lives cannot be understood - nor perhaps even endured - you do not hear all of life unless ^{until} you hear beyond the roar & confusion, the little cluster of our hurrying lives the counterpoint which alone can give them sense & harmony - The new melody which began when the world was at quiet midnight & the world in quiet sleep - the Almighty Word Poured down from heaven - Here was the voice of an angel "Unto you is born" - and then - and then - after an interval of silence To enable the audience to reach a stable - the first theme of the melody - the new song - the eternal counterpoint of the crying of Man - the cry of a Child, the whisper of a Baby, the

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II

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Christmas 1951.

THEME

voice of a Mother - now the music of life is
really complete - part & counterpart - man & the
God become man - a new song - went to hear
a few ^{of that sort} ~~travellers~~ ^{these} pre-Christmas night? -

"Come unto Me" - I am with you always -

"Because He was obedient" - this is the new ^{include - counterpart -} ~~new~~ ^{power}

3. Know nothing more important - clear understanding of
this basic truth about life & history - Some years
ago Mr. ~~Walter~~ ^{Walter} Haden - one of England's
most brilliant poets suddenly published a
work which was quite unexpected - slowly &
quietly he had come to the ~~Marx~~ ^{Marx} as so many
modern minds have come - through the valley of
disillusionment & despair - called "For the Time
Being" - a Christmas oratorio - in it, at one place,
the Narrator is a Roman - proud, unworried,
living as men live today, in a world of
headlines, a world secular & halfhearted, hearing only
the surface noise of life - the Roman ^{speaks} ~~speaks~~
strongly modern ring - was said yesterday by a ~~leader~~ ^{leader}
"There are stirring times for the editors of
History is in the making; Herod is on the march
The longest apartment in the world is already
under construction" ^{pirates}
True, the Western seas are still infested with
And the rising power of the Barbarians in the North
Is giving some cause for criticism; but even fully
Attentive to these dangers; we are rapidly arming
"Our great Empire shall be secure for a 1000 years"

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III

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THEME

4. And at that very moment - Mary was lulling an infant to sleep in a manger and the shepherds heard his song in the gloaming night and the hands of a Child were beginning to lay at the foundation of Empire and the melody of love was beginning to sound over the discords of time - oh, I know, surely the world would be stable as - nature, etc - but beyond them all was now this power of loneliness, of faith, of love, of hope, dominating & controlling in the end - the living power of the living God, living helplessness & supreme in a manger - "They are dead" - ^{my telling}

5. The final melody ^{musical} belongs to God - Christmas night - And now very personal - the Church wisely makes Advent a penitential season - why? - because so many things in our lives cannot harmonise with the melody, the song of Christmas - they strike the wrong note - and so, before we can really come to the manger to sing our little carols and bring our little gifts, there must be a sweeping of the heart, a cleansing of the spirit - "Except ye become" - wonder, faith, love, where shall we start? ^{rebut}
Our pride? - looks bad - sounds bad - beside the incredible humility of the manger.
Our selfishness? - "That Child gave up - the choir of heaven, the gates of the City, for the love of us -
Our fears, our doubts?" Angel: "Fear not" - He came to take them into His hands -
No - if there is to be no discord and no

No melody here,
no harmony

of time & life

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X

IV

DATE _____ OCCASION Christmas 1951

THEME _____

only with
our own
mouldless

disharmony in our Christmas we must come
To the Manger very light & very clean - past
X our sins and our hates - our striving & our
X pushing - our sentimentality & sophistication - to
X come at long last to the place where all
journeys end - with a Child born under the
flow of the world - lying in a manger that
we might look down to heaven - taking our
broken songs, broken hearts, broken lives &
making them new & great with the
(Counterpoint) of heaven - Holy Ghost of a
new faith & a new power - that we might
live under Him in His Kingdom etc. Nevertheless

Give
&
power

6. Certainly that must be my Christmas wish for
you - quiet - so that you may hear what
only faith can hear - God & man now
singing together - forever - and their song their
ultimate, eternal, melody of life - wish you
much joy - (Commit you to the angels of
God -)

Yours own
miserable

nothing greater
than that.

They are dead - courage & hope